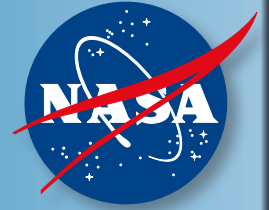




Public Involvement and the NEPA Process



The EIS Process

Notice of Intent

Scoping*

Draft EIS*

Final EIS

Record of Decision

***Opportunities for Public Participation**

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was enacted by Congress in 1969 to ensure that federal agencies consider the potential environmental impacts of their proposed actions and alternatives to be considered before deciding on a course of action. NEPA requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for major federal actions that may significantly affect the quality of the environment. Under NEPA, the term “environment” encompasses the natural and physical environment, such as air, water, geography, and geology, as well as the effect on people’s relationship with the environment, such as health, safety, jobs, housing, schools, transportation, noise, and aesthetics. An EIS looks at both short-term and long-term effects and considers possible measures to reduce or mitigate those effects.

The Council on Environmental Quality established NEPA requirements for all federal agencies, including procedures for preparing an EIS. Individual agencies including NASA have established their own implementing regulations to meet or exceed these requirements. The major steps in the NEPA process for preparing an EIS are as follows:

- Issue a Notice of Intent to begin the EIS process.
- Conduct the scoping process (gather input) on the types of issues to be addressed and identify significant issues related to a proposed action.
- Conduct the analysis.
- Issue a Notice of Availability (NOA) that announces the draft EIS is available for comment.
- Respond to public comments on the draft EIS.
- Prepare the final EIS.
- Issue a Record of Decision (ROD).

Public Involvement

The first step in getting public involvement as part of the EIS process is for a federal agency (in this case NASA) to issue a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* to inform the public that an EIS will be prepared and to formally announce the beginning of the scoping process. For the NASA Wind Farm EIS, to increase the opportunity for public input, NASA also issued a newspaper advertisement in local newspapers about the scoping meeting.

The scoping process allows for public input and comment on the types of issues to be addressed and alternatives to be considered. A minimum of 30 days is typically required for the scoping period. NASA has decided to extend this period to 60 days to maximize the opportunity for input to be received. As part of scoping, a public meeting is held. Comments are taken at the scoping meeting and, in addition, NASA will receive comments in a number of ways. (See below) Comments received during the scoping process are considered in developing the scope of the EIS.

Once a draft EIS is issued, a minimum of 45 days is provided for public comment. The public comment period for the Draft NASA Wind Farm EIS will begin with the publication of a Notice of

Availability (NOA) in the *Federal Register*. At least one public hearing is typically held to solicit public input on the draft EIS.

Comments from the public will be considered as NASA prepares a final EIS for publication and distribution. The final EIS will include responses to comments received during the public comment process and revised EIS text based on those comments. The final NASA Wind Farm EIS will also identify the agency's preferred alternative.

Once the final EIS is published, a minimum 30-day waiting period is required before a Record of Decision (ROD) can be issued in the *Federal Register*. The ROD notifies the public of the decision made on the proposed action and the reasons for that decision. It also includes a discussion of any other factors considered in making the decision.

The purpose of the NEPA process is to ensure that accurate environmental analyses are performed; that the public is involved; and that public officials make decisions based on an understanding of environmental consequences.

NASA is committed to keeping the public involved throughout the EIS process.

How Can You Participate in the Draft NASA Wind Farm EIS?

You have the opportunity to provide comments and offer input to NASA on the proposed action, the alternatives to be considered, and environmental impacts to be analyzed in the preparation of the Draft NASA Wind Farm EIS.

The scoping period for the Draft NASA Wind Farm EIS extends for 60 days from the date the Notice of Intent (NOI) was published in the *Federal Register* on August 25, 2010. All comments must be submitted to NASA by October 23, 2010. All comments received by this date will be considered during preparation of the Draft NASA Wind Farm EIS. Comments received after the close of the scoping period will be considered to the greatest extent possible.

In addition to comments submitted at the scoping meeting on September 14, 2010, comments can be submitted in the following ways:

- Via email to nasawindfarmeis@saic.com
- By faxing toll-free to 1-877-344-0517
- By mail to NASA Wind Farm EIS, P.O. Box 1490, Germantown, MD 20874-1490

Please mark all envelopes, faxes, and email: "Draft NASA Wind Farm EIS Comments."